

DRAUPADĪ IN BHĀRAVI'S *KIRĀTĀRJUNĪYAM*: AN INTROSPECTION

Karabi Sarmah

Research Scholar, Dept. of Sanskrit, Gauhati University.

Email: k.sarmah89@gmail.com

Abstract:

The *Kirātārjunīyam* of Bhāravi is one of the great works reckoned under *Pañcamahākāvya* and also under *Bṛhatṭrayī* in Sanskrit literature. The storyline of the *Kirātārjunīyam* has been taken from *Mahābhārata* by Vyāsa. Draupadī, one of the courageous characters from the *Mahābhārata*, is portrayed as the protagonist of the *Mahākāvya*. Bhāravi has redrawn the storyline of *Kirātārjunīyam* in his own style although he keeps the *Mahābhārata* as the base reference. Through this paper an attempt has been made to reflect upon the manner in which Bhāravi has portrayed the character of Draupadī in *Kirātārjunīyam*. In addition to that, an analysis is also done to show how the original character of the *Mahābhārata* are recreated by Bhāravi, one of the renowned Sanskrit litterateur of post- *Mahābhārata* times.

Keywords: *Kirātārjunīyam*, Bhāravi, *Mahābhārata*, Draupadī, protagonist, recreation.

I. Introduction:

The *Kirātārjunīyam* of Bhāravi is one of the great works reckoned under *Pañcamahākāvya* and also under *Bṛhatṭrayī* in Sanskrit literature. This work is written in eighteen cantos and the plot has been taken from *Vanaparvan* of *Mahābhārata*. The poem describes how Arjuna obtained the Pasūpāta weapon from Śiva. A brief discussion of the story of *Kirātārjunīyam* is given here.

On Vyāsa's advice to practice ascetism and propitiate Indra for acquisition of divine weapon Arjuna travelled to Indrakīla hills, on his departure Draupadī reminded him regarding the torture she got from the Kauravas. Arjuna began his intense austerities, the severity of which caused disturbance dances in front of him but could not distract. Upon satisfied on his asceticism Indra comes to him and advice him to worship Lord Shiva. In the twelve cantos it is described that Arjuna began severe austerities and being implored by other ascetics Shiva takes the forms of Kirāta and arrives to meet Arjuna. In the meanwhile a wicked Demon named Mūka took form of a wild boar and charges towards Arjuna. Shiva as appeared as Kirāta and Arjuna simultaneously shoots an arrow at the boar and killed it. They argue each other over their claim for shooting the boar and finally a battle ensues. They fought for long time an Arjuna got astonished at not being able to conquer the opponent and recognizing him as the God surrenders to Lord Śiva. On Arjuna's bravery Lord got satisfied and bestowed upon him the powerful weapon *the Pāsūpāta*. The character of Draupadī is portrayed as the female protagonist. In this epic Draupadī played a very brave role.

II. Draupadī in the *Kirātārjunīyam*:

The story of *Kirātārjunīyam* has been abstracted from *Mahābhārata*. It relates to one of the single incident of *Vanaparvan* of the great epic the *Mahābhārata*. Like the *Mahābhārata*, in

the *Kirātārjunīyam* also, the character of Draupadī has been projected as the heroine of the story. But her character is confined to the aspect of a queen as the story has the limitation of developing from a single incident from the vast *Mahābhārata*. Therefore, in the following discussion her character is analyzed as a queen as depicted in the *Kirātārjunīyam*.

II. a. Draupadī's role in the development of the story:

In this epic Draupadī is portrayed as a character interpreting the true essence of a brave queen of *kṣatriya*. A queen, who is made to suffer humiliation in front of none other than her five mighty husbands, has not lost her composure or, for that matter, has not drifted away even slightly from her ethics. Rather, for whatever she has suffered, she encourages her husbands to take appropriate revenge at the proper time.

In the first act, Draupadī becomes angry when she comes to know about Duryodhana's kingdom from Vanesara, a spy of Yudhiṣṭhira. She becomes even more upset on seeing the rather unconcerned attitude of Yudhiṣṭhira. Draupadī scornfully tells Yudhiṣṭhira that although he is such a learned person who barely needs advice from her wife, she cannot but help to say something now.ⁱ She criticizes Yudhiṣṭhira for immaturely renouncing his own kingdom by saying that it is as though a mad elephant gets rid of its precious necklace. She argues that a man is never wrong in treating a real bad person badly.ⁱⁱ A wise Draupadī says that a man who can see his own kingdom being taken away by the enemy right before his eye and still can remain silent can never expect people to be obliged to him. Nor does any friend of him will be happy to be friend him anymore.ⁱⁱⁱ

The underlying essence is that Draupadī tries to make Yudhiṣṭhira aware of his duty. Forgiveness cannot be an appreciable virtue for a Kṣatriya. Draupadī was very much sensitive about the duties and virtues of her *kṣatriya* husbands. She was a woman who would not lose her composure of mind at the time of distress. She always remained careful to remind her husbands of their actual duties.

Draupadī could not remain silent on seeing the plight of the Pāṇḍavas while they were in exile. She was upset that Yudhiṣṭhira was using the tremendous power of Arjuna in useless things like collecting bark garments.^{iv} She was surprised to see that Yudhiṣṭhira did not do anything in spite of seeing Nakula and Sahadeva wallowing in dirt and dust like the wild elephants.^v Moreover Yudhiṣṭhira himself gradually became weaker because of living on wild foods. Draupadī says that there is pride on defeat and reminded him that a Kṣatriya does not forget his duties in the face of difficulties. There is pride in defeat if one does not give up till the last moment. Therefore, Draupadī urges Yudhiṣṭhira to go for war. A learned Draupadī says that a person like Yudhiṣṭhira full of energy and ability should never take an exile of 13 years seriously. For a king who is inspired by victory never fails to make impossible true with whatever strategy the situation may demand.

The words said by Draupadī are full of absolute wisdom. Her advice regarding the political strategy shows her ability and talent like anything. As a queen these qualities are something that everyone would expect to see in her.

Draupadī attempts to incite him to declare war, upbraiding him for stupidly accepting the exile rather than breaking the agreement and declaring war to regain what is rightfully theirs.

Not only Draupadī urges Yudhiṣṭhira to take appropriate revenge for her but she herself also leaves no stone unturned to give appropriate answer to the people who humiliated her. In the third act, Vyāsa advises Arjuna for deep meditation and to gather the necessary weapons that will be required for the battle. Draupadī reminds Arjuna of the incident of Duṣṣāsana forcefully touching Draupadī's hair. Draupadī encourage Arjuna by reminding him of all the humiliations made to her. She advises Arjuna not to break his meditation until the war is over.^{vi} To achieve success one must not be unnecessarily excited.

She scornfully tells Arjuna that it is a shame that such an incident happened. She says that losing one's self respect is much like an elephant losing his teeth. Draupadī in fact reminded Arjuna of the duties and virtues a Kṣatriya should possess. She said that a true Kṣatriya should be able to protect the righteous. As a bow has no meaning if it cannot serve its purpose in the battlefield, similarly being a *kṣatriya* has also no meaning if it cannot protect the good men.^{vii}

All these are actually enough to prove Draupadī extent of wisdom and her confidence to freely speak out things at the right moment. By drawing excellent analogies, she inspires her husbands not to be perturbed by difficulties and to keep believing in their actual duties. Had she been an ordinary woman, such things would have been impossible to imagine with her which once again reminds us a practical and pragmatic character called Draupadī.

Draupadī was very much careful to ensure that Arjuna could peacefully meditate while staying away from the beloved ones. She also advised Arjuna not to be regardless of his personal safety while living alone for a long time. For the minds of those whose reasons are overpowered by hatred can go wrong even towards good men.^{viii}

Draupadī's irrefutable and arguments eventually makes Arjuna realize all the humiliations done by the enemies.^{ix} And so he finally decides to engross himself in deep meditation.

These aspects reflect the strength of the character of Draupadī in a crystal clear manner.

Conclusion:

Thus it can be said that unlike in the *Mahābhārata*, it has not been possible here to throw light upon each and every aspects of the character here. Here Bhāravi portrays the character only as a pure kṣatriya woman who is brave, determined and committed enough to ensure that her beloved husbands are not yielding in the face of difficulties. Rather the husbands regain their mental composure and wisdom, and become aware of their actual duties. The character has, therefore, been successful enough to bring all these ingredients into a beautiful coherence.

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Endnotes:

- ⁱ bhavādr̥ṣeṣu pramadājanoditam bhavatyadhikṣepa ivānuśāsanam/
tathāpi vaktum vyavasāyayanti mām nīrastanārīsamayā durādhayaḥ//*Kirātārjunīyam*,I,28
- ⁱⁱ vrajanti mūr̥ḍhadhiyaḥ parābhavaṁ bhavanti māyāviṣu ye na māyinaḥ/
praviśya hi ghnanti śathāstathāvidhānasamvṛtāṅgānnīsitā iveāvaḥ//*ibid*,I,30
- ⁱⁱⁱ avandhyakopasya vihanurāpadām bhavanti vaśyāḥ svayameva dehinaḥ/
amarśaśunyena janasya jantunā na jātahārdena na vidviśādarah//*ibid*,33
- ^{iv} vijitya yaḥ prājyamayacchadutrān kurūnkupyam vasu vāsavopamaḥ/
sa valkavāsāmsi tavādhunāharan karoti manyum na katham dhanañjayaḥ//*ibid*,35
- ^v vanāntaśayyākathinīkṛtākṛtī kacācitau viṣvagivāgajau gajau/
katham tvametau dhṛtisaṁyamau yamau vilokayannutsahase na bādhitum//*ibid*,I,36
- ^{vi} magnām dviśacchadmani pañkabhūte saṁbhāvanām bhūtimivoddharīṣyan/
ādhidviśāmā tapasām prasiddhersmadvinā mā bhṛśamunmanībhūḥ//*ibid*,III,39
- ^{vii} sa kṣatriyastrāṇasahaḥ satām yastatkārmukam karmasu yasya śaktiḥ/
vahandvayīm yadyaphale'rthajāte karotyasaṁskārahatāmivoktim//*ibid*,III,48
- ^{viii} māgāścīrāyāikacaraḥ pramādam vasannasambādhaśive'pi deśe/
mātsaryarāgopahatātmanām hi skhalanti sādhiṣvapi mānasāni//*ibid*,III,53
- ^{ix} udīritām tāmīti yājñasenyā navīkṛtodgrāhitaviprakārām/
āsādyā vācam sa bhṛśam didīpe kāṣṭhāmudīcīmiva tigmarāśmiḥ//*ibid*,III,55